

Our house is on fire

Greta Thunberg



Greta is a 16-year-old Swedish climate activist. She initiated the 'School Strike for Climate' movement, which saw 1.4 million students around the world take action on 15 March 2019. She spoke at Davos in January 2019.

Our house is on fire, I am here to say our house is on fire. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes.

In that time unprecedented changes in all aspects of society need to have taken place, including a reduction of our CO₂ emissions by at least 50%. Please note that those numbers do not include the aspect of equity which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris agreement work on a global scale. Nor does it include tipping points or feedback loops like the extreme, powerful methane gas being released from the thawing Arctic permafrost.

At places like Davos people like to tell success stories, but their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag. And on climate change we have to acknowledge that we have failed. All political movements in their present form have done so. And the media has failed to create broad public awareness. But *Homo sapiens* has not yet failed. Yes we are failing but there is still time to turn everything around. We can still fix this, we still have everything in our own hands. But unless we recognize the overall failures of our current systems we probably don't stand a chance.

We are facing a disaster of unspoken sufferings for enormous amounts of people and now is not the time for speaking politely, focusing on what we can or cannot say. Now it's the time to speak clearly. Solving the climate crisis is the greatest and most complex challenge that *Homo sapiens* has ever faced.

The main solution, however, is so simple that even a small child can understand it.

We have to stop the emissions of greenhouse gases. And either we do that or we don't. You say nothing in life is black or white but that is a lie, a very dangerous lie. Either we prevent a 1.5 degree warming or we don't. Either we avoid setting off that irreversible chain reaction beyond human control, or we don't. Either we choose to go on as a civilization or we don't. That is as black or white as it gets.

There are no grey areas when it comes to survival. Now we all have a choice. We can create transformational action that will safeguard the future living conditions for humankind, or we can continue with our business as usual and fail. That is up to you and me.

Some say that we should not engage in activism, instead we should leave everything to our politicians and just vote for change instead. But what do we do when there is no political will? What do we do when the politics needed are nowhere in sight?

Here in Davos, just like everywhere else, everyone is talking about money. It seems that money and growth are our only main concerns. And since the climate crisis is a crisis that has never once been treated as a crisis, people are simply not aware of the full consequences for our everyday life.

People are not aware that there is such a thing as a carbon budget, and just how incredibly small that remaining carbon budget is. And that needs to change today. No other current challenge can match the importance of establishing a wide public awareness and understanding of our rapidly disappearing carbon budgets, that should and must become a new global currency in the very heart of future and present economics.

We are now at a time in history where everyone with any insight into the climate crisis that threatens our civilization and the entire biosphere must speak out in clear language, no matter how uncomfortable and unprofitable that may be. We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint is, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform the bigger your responsibility.

Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people to give them hope. But I don't want your hope, I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic, I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act, I want you to act as if you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house was on fire, because it is.